



State of Arizona
Department of Education

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Superintendent of
Public Instruction

August 22, 2002
CN # 08-03

To: Administrators of Child Nutrition Programs

From: Lynne Dulin, Director
Child Nutrition Programs

Subject: Documenting Free and Reduced Price Eligibility of Homeless Children in the
Child Nutrition Programs (Updated)

As specified in a January 2002 amendment to the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11431 et seq.), Congress clarified the definition of homeless children and youth as individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. This definition includes:

1. Children and youths who are sharing the housing of another person due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement.
2. Children and youths who reside in a public or private place not ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.
3. Children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings.
4. Migrant children who qualify as homeless because they are living in any of the circumstances above.

A provision of the statute requires that each school district designate an educational agency liaison for homeless children and youths. If a district does not have an educational agency liaison, the district may appoint an individual to act as a liaison until one is designated. In general, the duties of the educational agency liaison are to ensure homeless children are identified by school personnel, have full opportunity to enroll and succeed in school, and that they receive educational and other services for which they are eligible, i.e. Child Nutrition Programs (CNP).

To expedite the delivery of nutritional benefits for the CNP, school officials may accept documentation that a child is homeless from the local educational liaison. Documentation for free meal eligibility must consist of the child's name or a list of names, effective date(s), and the signature of the local educational liaison or the director of the homeless shelter. This documentation is acceptable in lieu of a free and reduced price meal application.

Although many homeless children will be living in emergency and transitional shelters, under the expanded definition, a homeless child could temporarily live with a friend or family member in a home and still be considered homeless. If a homeless child or family temporarily resides with another household, the host family's income is not taken into consideration when determining whether the homeless family is eligible for free and reduced price benefits in the CNP. A homeless child qualifies for free meals simply by the documentation provided by the local educational agency liaison.

In addition, if the host family applies for free and reduced benefits they may include the homeless family as household members if the host family provides financial support to the homeless family, such as shelter, utilities, clothing or food. In such cases, the host family must include any income received by the homeless family. The host family's free and reduced price eligibility is determined by the traditional free and reduced price application. It is the responsibility of the host family to update the school when household circumstances have changed, i.e. the homeless family relocates.

It is important to work with your educational agency liaison to provide CNP benefits as quickly and as efficiently as possible. If you have any questions regarding this memo, please contact your CNP specialist at (602) 542-8700.